ED 374 132 TM 021 833

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TITLE A Longitudinal Multiple Indicators Assessment of an Interdistrict Transfer Program and Some Implications for Multicultural Education.
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education (New Orleans, LA, April 5-7, 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Achievement Tests; *Black Students; Court Litigation; Desegregation Effects; *Desegregation Plans; Educational Assessment; Elementary Secondary Education; Longitudinal Studies; Magnet Schools; Mathematics Tests; Multicultural Education; Reading Tests; *School Desegregation; School Districts; Scores; Standardized Tests; Test Results; *Transfer Students; Urban Schools; Writing Tests
IDENTIFIERS Indicators; *Missouri (Saint Louis); *Performance Based Evaluation; Stanford Achievement Tests

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a very brief summary of the first three years of study of the court-ordered desegregation effort in St. Louis (Missouri). It examines differences in the reading and mathematics scores from the Stanford Achievement Test along with a performance-based writing assessment for four groups of African-American students. These groups consist of the magnet, integrated, and nonintegrated schools in the city, along with transfer students who are attending suburban schools. With a summary of these results, further information is presented from a study of nine focus groups and an attitude survey of city high school students. Overall, students are not doing well in comparison with normative data from students nationwide. The full range of performance is found among these students, with magnet school students generally performing best, followed by transfer students, and then by integrated and nonintegrated students in no consistent order of achievement. Some possible explanations for the generally disappointing results are discussed, with some possible solutions. Five graphs present findings. (Contains 23 references.) (SLD)

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ED 374 132

A Longitudinal Multiple Indicators Assessment of an Interdistrict Transfer Program and Some Implications for Multicultural Education

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Abstract

This paper provides a very brief summary of the first three years of study of the Court ordered desegregation effort in St. Louis. This study examines differences in the reading and mathematics scores from the Stanford along with a performance based writing assessment for four groups of African-American Students. These groups consist of the Magnet, Integrated and Non-integrated schools in the City, and the Transfer students who are attending suburban schools. In addition to the summary of these results, the author presents further information gained from a focus group study and an attitude survey. The paper ends with a discussion of some possible explanations for the generally disappointing results and what might be done to obtain greater school achievement levels.

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A Longitudinal Multiple Indicators Assessment of an Interdistrict Transfer Program and Some Implications for Multicultural Education[1]

Robert W. Lissitz
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National Council on Measurement in Education, 1994

This article is a summary of three years of reasonably intense study of the Voluntary Interdistrict Transfer Program that has been operational in St. Louis for approximately 10 years. This program was the result of a court order and is, essentially, a very ambitious school choice program. In 1990 a court order mandated a study of the transfer program and a comparison to the St. Louis City magnet programs and integrated and non-integrated schools in the City. Non-integrated means approximately 99% African-American and integrated means approximately 75% African-American. Only African-American students from each of these four programs were included in this study. There was also a focus group study of 9th and 11th grade students in the city, the transfer program, and in the suburbs as well as a small sample of parents.

(Parenthetically, as my involvement expanded, my earlier experiences working as an evaluator for the Syracuse City Schools in 1969 and starting a minority recruitment program at the University of Georgia in the mid 1970s began to feel more and more familiar to me. The minority recruitment program was funded for a number of years by the National Institutes of Health and resulted in approximately 20 Black students per year for 8 years being helped in their efforts to attend graduate schools in the field of Psychology. The similarity of my feelings in response to seeing the same problems across a 25 year period impressed me greatly.)

This article is a summary of the core study of the transfer program in St. Louis and the associated focus group study. The reader will notice that it starts with mostly factual statements of what the data portray regarding achievement and then attitudes. This is followed by some observations from a Focus group study and finally a summary of concluding points that are frankly matters of interpretation and personal opinion (even though they are based upon this research work). In other words, the presentation proceeds from the more data oriented to the more conjectural.

The descriptions of the two studies in St. Louis are very briefly presented next. The Assessment study, that is still being conducted in St. Louis, consists of:

- 4 groups -- Non Integrated, Integrated, Magnet and Transfer -- ONLY Black students were in this study,
- 4 grades -- 4, 6, 8, and 10 -- all the Black students enrolled in school were included

1 This paper builds upon a talk presented to superintendents and principals of schools in the St. Louis Metropolitan area, January 5, 1994. This work has benefitted greatly from discussions with Dr. Susan Uchitelle, director of the Voluntary Interdistrict Coordinating Council, although the errors and misjudgments are my own. Finally, the author wishs to thank the VICC for all their support.

- Cross-sectional and Longitudinal -- the first two years were replicated cross sectional data collections, and the third year and the coming fourth year are replicated longitudinal data collections.

- Achievement measures -- Stanford reading and mathematics, and a measure of writing i.e., reading, writing and arithmetic

- Attitude survey -- A St. Louis Metropolitan School Survey was developed to measure the student's attitudes

As with all field based studies, some concerns can be raised with the design. The three main issues are:

1. equivalence of the groups when first formed -- We decided to use the earlier administered California Achievement Test 77 (CTB McGraw Hill) scores as a measure of initial achievement and the Cognitive Abilities Test (COGAT, Riverside) as a measure of initial aptitude prior to transfer and we have tried to statistically use these measures to correct for initial differences in the groups. This is a very risky thing to do. While the Analysis of Covariance may be defended as the best alternative, it certainly cannot be defended as a certain correction for prior existing differences in intact groups (Lord, 1969).

2. migration of the students in groups -- A serious problem exists with all student groups and is particularly prevalent with city students and involves their moving from one school to another. The lack of stability of the students raises questions about drawing conclusions about effects. We tried to guard against this by requiring that students selected for the study be in the program for a minimum of 1 year prior to the collection of data.

3. low stakes nature of the testing -- This is the main issue, in my opinion. It may be that the students being tested do not care how they perform and failure to try is likely to be related to a student's level of success.

The focus group study consisted of 9 groups (2 of parents, 2 of city students, 4 transfer groups, and 2 resident groups -- one of blacks and one of whites). The leader of the group was of the same race as the group members. All group interactions were transcribed. As with any qualitative research (and quantitative as well, for that matter) some concerns can also be raised with this design. Two significant problems seem particularly relevant and the first is the sampling issue. A very small percentage of the students and parents who were initially randomly selected to be in the groups actually attended the sessions. This calls into question their representativeness, although one might expect that the better students would be the ones to attend such an activity. The second has to do with the demand characteristics of the focus group itself. It may be that a Black (or White) student surrounded by other Black (or White) students will not feel comfortable talking about certain issues.

I. Who are the groups initially?

Magnet students are the most capable students in the study, and the transfer students are generally next in ability, and the Non integrated and Integrated are third. This is based upon the early COGAT and CTB data. The average COGAT score for the 75th percentile of the Magnet students was approximately 100.

II. What are the key results from the cross sectional achievement data?

Two graphs (14-1 and 14-4) from the 1993 data are illustrative of all three years of achievement test results. A number of interesting and important conclusions are found in these data and their related analyses.

Insert Graphs 14-1 and 14-4 about here

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a. Magnet students are highest at the early grades and continue to be the highest performing overall.

b. Transfer students are generally the next highest in ability and generally do the next best on achievement, although they are more like Non-integrated and integrated students. Non-integrated and integrated students show no consistent order of achievement, despite considerable additional funds available to the non-integrated schools.

c. All four groups show regular increases in the successively higher grade on Stanford reading and mathematics, when you compare 4, 6, and 8th grades.

d. All four groups show some increase in the higher grade on writing when comparing 6 to 8th grade. One cannot compare 4th grade with other grades since the scoring rubric was changed for the upper three grades.

e. City students, including magnet students, level off at 8th grade showing nearly the same level of achievement at 10th grade or even go down a little.

f. Transfer students alone continue to show some consistent, though modest improvement from 8th to 10th grade. They catch up or nearly so with the Magnet students at 10th grade on the Stanford measures.

g. Differences between student groups greatly decrease when you correct for initial differences in prior ability and prior achievement. The analysis of covariance results correcting for initial ability, indicate that the group differences are best accounted for by this indicator. The achievement variance accounted for by ability ranges from 22% to 56%.

h. Overall the students in the study are not doing well compared to normative data of students in general. This is a typical finding nationally. The full range of performance is found among these Black students, but the overall group average is much lower than we hoped to see.

III. Do we get the same achievement results if we measure the same students as they move from 1991 and 1993?

Three figures are selected to illustrate the typical results of the longitudinal data collection. These are identified as 20-6, 20-7, and 20-8 in the full report based on the 1993 data collection and submitted to the court. The reader will notice that the longitudinal results support the cross sectional ones.

Insert figures 20-6, 20-7 and 20-8

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a. Magnet students continue to show the highest overall performance levels when

comparing 1991 to 1993 on grades 4 to 6 and 6 to 8 and 8 to 10 on Stanford Reading and Math scale scores.

b. Not much improvement is shown by anyone from 1991 to 1993 on the Writing assessment.

c. Transfer students tend to show the most improvement from 8 to 10th grade.

IV. What do we learn about student attitudes?

All four groups are generally, reasonably close to each other except on their indication of school preference. The other differences are much more subtle.

a. City students prefer the city and the transfer students prefer the suburbs. Basically St. Louis is operating a big school choice program.

b. At 6th and 8th grades, the transfer students show more relatively negative attitudes that get worse from 1991 to 1993.

c. By 10th grade, the transfer students look similar to the other groups of students. This result is supported by both longitudinal and cross sectional attitude data. In other words, the trend for worsening attitudes is absent by the time students get to 10th grade.

d. The attitude item "Everyone should speak proper English in school" gets the most disagreement from the transfer students. They seem to be more sensitive to this issue, although none of the groups of students seem to agree very strongly that everyone should speak proper English. Perhaps being in an integrated environment is seen as threatening to the Black student's sense of cultural identity. If African-American students, as indicated by these data, believe that they are being disloyal to their people or their heritage if they speak proper English then they are holding a belief that will make their success in school and society much less likely.

e. There are a set of items that relate to behavior problems. Examples of these include "If someone says something bad to a friend of mine, I should help to get back at him/her", "It is all right for students to settle personal disputes by fighting", "I would be very upset if I got suspended for a few days." The transfer students show progressive improvement on these items from 8 to 10th grade, and the magnet, non-integrated and Integrated students almost without exception develop worse attitudes (i.e., greater acceptance of fighting and being suspended).

f. There are also a set of items that have to do with issues of integration, including "Speaking Proper English in school", "All groups are equally worthwhile", "Going to school with other races helps me get ready for the real world", "Liking people who are similar", and "Black students do better in the Suburbs." With one exception, "A white student could be a friend of mine" the transfer students are not progressively internalizing positive views more so than the other groups. Being in an integrated suburban school does not seem to be of help in attitude formation as regards integration.

g. When all four groups showed a consistent change in attitudes it seemed to be toward a more negative attitude and that was true from 4th to 6th grade and from 6th to 8th grade. At the 8 to 10 grade shift, there was little consistent movement good or bad. This sounds a great deal like the typical middle grade adolescent rebelliousness that we expect to decrease as students move through high school.

h. There were also a set of items that relate to "locus of control" (Rotter, 1966) i.e. does a

student believe that he or she is responsible for their own success or failure or does the student believe that society, or luck or the school is responsible. There has been a lot of research on this topic. We all know some people who seem to feel like poor little me (what might be called the PLM syndrome), and believe that things are always happening to them. On the other hand, we all know some people who try to take charge of their lives and try to do things that will help themselves to a better life. Examples of attitude items are "If a student studies hard, he or she will do well", and "If students get a bad education, it's probably their own fault." There were not consistent group differences on these items. Again, the different school situations (non-integrated, integrated, magnet and transfer) do not tend to affect the student's attitudes in a differential way. We did find that over all groups, the item "Getting good grades is a matter of luck, not hard work" correlated best (Pearson Correlation of about .3 across all grades) with the Stanford Mathematics and Language (reading) scores. Language performance correlated higher than mathematics performance.

V. What accounts best for the differences in student achievement?

This research indicates a number of important results that can be summarized as follows:

1. Stanford Reading was more related to student attitudes than was Stanford mathematics. In other words, if you believe that attitudes can affect achievement or the other way around, you are more likely to be right if you focus on reading.

2. Students with an internal locus of control are better academically. The consistently best overall attitude item predictor of achievement was the item that asked if students agree or disagree with the statement "Getting good grades is a matter of luck, not hard work." Taking personal responsibility (i.e., believing that hard work is the secret to good grades) is related to being a good student. This is not a surprise and even sounds like something from Proverbs. We all might think about how we as a society can help students to adopt this internal or personal responsibility orientation. This is not a trivial question, in my opinion since self pity and scapegoating are seductive emotions. Dweck (1975) has reported on an effort to develop a training program for personal responsibility, and a local, St. Louis, approach to this problem is the Personal Responsibility Program (PREP, Grady, 1993), although the initial evaluation is not particularly encouraging.

3. Students with an open attitude toward all races are better students. Items such as "A student of another race could be a good friend of mine" and "All groups are equally worthwhile" also show this association with the Stanford Achievement Test results. This observation can be seen as related to the previous one -- Students who look for external, superficial characteristics such as race to categorize others are less likely to be good students.

4. The best predictor of student achievement is their earlier ability measure (COGAT score). In other words, a student's measure of ability is his or her best predictor of academic success. It is even better than prior achievement on a similar national assessment test. If you want to increase your accuracy of prediction of academic performance, the best information you can obtain would be the COGAT scores, not the CTB CAT. This is certainly consistent with Walberg's (1984) summary of factors related to school achievement.

The direction of the causality of these associations is not as clear as it might first appear. It might be argued that these data mean that it might be easier for a teacher to improve reading results by changing attitudes to be more internal and more open to others, but you could also argue, based on these data, that it is achievement that influences attitudes and not the other way around. There is much to be said for this. Perhaps verbally less capable students look for superficial explanations that are outside their own responsibility. There may also be a cycle here that repeats and repeats.

In other words, doing poorly, leads to looking for excuses and the more external excuses you find the less likely you are to do well. etc., etc.

VI. Does the Transfer program makes a difference to achievement?

The answer is yes, the Transfer program makes a difference, but the nature of the effect may not be what one would expect or want.

1. There is no correlation between the no. of months in the Transfer program and school achievement. In other words, more exposure to the suburbs is NOT better than less.

2. Knowledge of group membership explains very little of the variance. Knowing what schooling group (Non-integrated, Integrated, Magnet, and Transfer) a student is in tells you very little about the student's level of performance. For example, if you are trying to guess how high or low the academic performance of a student is, you will not increase the accuracy of your guess much by being told if the student is in a non-integrated, integrated, magnet or transfer school. The largest percentage of achievement variance accounted for by group membership was 14%.

3. On average, the high schools in the suburbs continue to get some improvement from their city students at 10th grade. Not even the city high school magnet programs get much improvement at 10th grade when compared to their 8th grade levels. In this sense being in the Transfer program makes a difference.

VII. What does this mean?

My conjecture is that there are two main reasons for the continued increase in achievement levels found in the Suburbs for high school. One is that the suburbs have higher normative performance standards. These standards are set by the generally higher performing students in the suburbs as well as corresponding higher teacher imposed standards. There is probably more peer pressure to succeed as well. It should be noted again that the full range of performance is found among students in this study. We do not have data to show if the teachers in the suburbs actually hold all students to higher standards, but we do know that the attitude survey indicates that all the groups of African-American students at all four grades agree that "Teachers expect good work" and the "Principal wants students to do well." This suggests that teachers and principals, in general, are at least expressing high standards in the non integrated, integrated, Magnet, and transfer schools. It is interesting to note that the level of agreement with this item decreases just a little at each successive grade. In other words, 6th graders agreed a little less than do 4th graders, etc., but they all, on average, still remain in strong agreement with this item through 10th grade. This suggests that the performance problem is not the fault of expectations communicated by the school personnel. There is certainly some evidence to suggest that having higher standards and expecting improved academic performance from all students may lead to greater success (McNett, 1984), but we cannot completely sort out that issue in this study.

We also know that, in so far as the transfer students are in regular classrooms, they are with students who are generally -- on average -- doing better in school than they are doing. What we are talking about are mean differences in performance. There is some overlap in the transfer group with the achievement level of resident students in the suburbs, but in general, on average, there is a large difference in performance levels. This average performance difference between racial groups (and SES groups) is well known (e.g., Brody, 1992) and typically approximates 1 standard deviation is size. This higher performance level by the resident students could be a motivation for doing better. Related to the point being made is a quote from one of the transfer students who was in the focus group study who said "When you see how the white kids making

good grades, you want to do it yourself." This is what is meant by saying that the school is setting normatively higher standards. The belief that the suburbs also push the students harder was held by many of those in the focus groups, including the parents.

A related factor that we might have considered as relevant is the school culture having to do with the support of other students for academic success. One school culture that might be related to greater success is characterized in the Phi Delta Kappa publication by Purkey and Novak (1988). A more complete summary of some of the literature in the area of school effectiveness can be found in Madaus, Airasian, and Kellaghan (1980), and Stettler (1988).

In our attitude survey we found that students were neutral at all grades to the question "Students want others to do well." They neither disagree nor agree to any great extent. At the same time though, we do not find the students claiming that other classmates are inhibiting their success. Items that students tend to, at least moderately, disagree with are "Sometimes I don't answer questions in class because of what other students will think of me", "If your homework is too good, the other students will dislike you" and "If I appear to be smart, other students will dislike me." Overall, the magnet students tend to disagree slightly more with these items, although by 10th grade, the transfer students join the magnet students in their slightly higher level of disagreement. This may be a good benefit of being in the suburbs. Since the magnet students show virtually level performance from 8th to 10th grades, this attitude factor is probably not what is responsible for the continued performance improvement of the transfer students.

The second reason that might be posited for the continued improvement into high school is that we know that many American city high school teachers are spending most of their time with behavior problems and other non instructional activities and relatively little time is actually spent teaching. My guess is that the "time on task" is greater in the high schools in the suburbs. Again, this study did not focus on process variables so we do not know the exact level of distraction in the city classrooms. But, it is unlikely that the St. Louis city public schools are significantly different from the nation's other large urban school systems that have been studied.

In summary, the data from our survey and the focus groups suggest that the problem is not a lack of support by teachers or principals. The survey indicates that the students do not consider the school personnel a problem. The students also do not indicate that they think the problem is a hostile environment instituted by classmates. This is surprising given the level of violence depicted by the students in the focus groups. It is not as clear that the parents are providing a supportive atmosphere in the student's judgment (see Shade, 1979 for an example of a discussion of the importance of parental behavior).

There are other theories for this performance differential in the suburbs that we have not had a chance to test. One of these is that the attendance rates for the Transfer students may exceed those in the city. This is a variant on the "time on task" hypothesis. A second reason may be the tendency of schools starting in the early to mid 1960s to orient their efforts toward students who have problems and this is inevitably being done in the city more than in the suburbs. For example, the approximately 5 to 1 ratio of spending for special education versus regular education students in Saint Louis puts the resources where they will probably not make much difference to academic achievement. It seems that the U. S. schools began, in the Kennedy years to divert disproportionate effort to improve the achievement of students who have less potential away from those with greater capabilities. The effect of this effort would be expected to be a decrease in the achievement level of students with potential and virtually no improvement from students with little or no potential. The general failure of compensatory education to have long terms positive effects has been carefully chronicled (refer to Brody, 1992 for one summary of this matter) and ignored since the mid 1960s (see Edmonds, 1984, as an example of someone who disagreed with this conclusion). Coleman's (1966) work demonstrating the minor effect upon academic achievement

that can be credited to school effects and school funding is well known. Jencks (1972) estimated the variance due to school curriculum differences as 2 to 3%. There are several observations that were made in the focus group study that also bear directly on this evidence, and these conclusions.

The focus group students were in either 9th or 11th grade and therefore their comments are quite relevant to the lack of progress obtained by the City 10th graders. Three issues were particularly striking in the focus group transcripts (Lissitz, 1993) -- violence, ROTC as an approach to school environment, and feelings of victimization.

The first of these issues was the large number of references to physical violence by the city students and the transfer students. It was clearly a topic of interest and concern. The author's of the Focus Group Study (Centers, 1993) briefly reference the issue of violence, although they state that "The discussions of fighting were tangential to the purposes of this study, and the Centers are not able to make any definitive statements about their significance in the transfer program (page 39)."

In a more quantitative content analysis of the focus groups (unfortunately done without a second rater to use as a reliability check), it was found that of the 71 references to violence that were counted over all the student transcripts, 62% dealt with Black on Black aggression and 34% dealt with Black on White instances of aggression. There was one reported instance of Chinese on Black aggression and three instances that could be considered mutually aggressive attacks by Black and White students. The resident Black students' focus group had the least number of references to violence, followed by the resident White students, tied with one of the 11th grade transfer groups. At the other end of the continuum are the two city groups and the other two transfer groups.

One of the examples of violence that might be worth thinking about, since it was mentioned independently in several focus groups, was the use of the Rodney King incident as an excuse to attack Whites. On several occasions, students told us that someone would yell "Rodney King" and a group of Black students would run through the halls beating up any white students they happened upon. The example is a good one because it captures the mindlessness of most, if not all, of the references to violence -- i.e., in many instances the violence was directed at students (Black and White, but primarily Black) who had provided no reported justification for the outburst. In other words, it is hard to argue based upon the focus group transcripts that the aggressive students were protecting themselves from harm or responding violently to racist remarks or other such hostile actions or verbalizations. Many of the examples provided by the focus group students seem to show that the perpetrators looked for an opportunity to intimidate or hurt another student and took advantage of that opportunity. As one 11th grade transfer student said when asked by the group leader if Blacks were inferior to Whites "No, because the way we think of it is, you can be as smart as you want to, but if we can beat your brains in, no smartness ain't going to count for nothing, so." Again, though, it is important to remember that the majority of the instances of aggression were directed by Blacks against Blacks. This is, in the author's opinion, of direct relevance to the depressed academic success of these same students. Being aggressive and being the recipient of aggressive behavior is a serious distraction from the real business of education.

One strong impression that remains from reading the transcripts and from having attended several of the focus groups relates to the lack of improvement in writing performance and disinterest in speaking standard English that was mentioned earlier in the presentation of the quantitative data results. Extremely poor use of the English language would characterize a great many of the students in most of the focus groups. These 9th and 11th graders, on average, are simply not articulate as indicated by both the comments captured in the transcripts and the written essays as summarized by the test scores. This is a very serious problem to those students who

want to succeed in high school and eventually in advanced schooling or in the world of work. As indicated above, if these are the better students, as the response rate might suggest, the reality is probably even worse.

The second issue that was identified as potentially important for further study is the repeated reference by Black students in the ROTC magnet program in St. Louis about how unusual physical violence was in their school. This observation might be a potentially useful clue about how society can begin to think about structuring schools for those students who show a propensity for violence. If the schools are to improve their safety, local leadership needs to begin to talk openly about these issues and begin to explore and support effective ways to eliminate violence.

This is an important problem and if there is something that we can capture from these observations that could be utilized in schools to make them safer and more effective places, that would be very desirable. Other explanations for the few references to violence in the ROTC magnet program can, of course, be offered. For example, it may be the nature of the students who self-select to attend such schools. Perhaps students who are comfortable with and desire a well-ordered environment may not have the same propensity for hostile acts as those students who do not choose to attend such a school. The "effective schools" literature is consistent with this observation in noting that a strong principal is a common element of an effective urban school. Such a school leader provides a safer environment for all students and thus a more effective learning center. Perhaps the schools need to be empowered to separate students who are able to behave from those who cannot. Schools staffed and organized to deal with problem students are likely to be much more effective with these students, while allowing well-behaved students to get an education. The issue of the reallocation of resources toward problem students might again be raised, but it is unlikely that other well-behaved students are receiving the best schooling possible if they are in a situation where they must be constantly vigilant to protect themselves from verbal and physical abuse. We can hope that the parents and various concerned groups will begin to support schools that engage in efforts to deal with behavior problems.

The third observation from the focus groups is that it was clearly very important for many of the Black students to believe that the schools engaged in a pervasive pattern of racism. This again relates directly to the issue of locus of control. Several parents in the focus groups indicated that their children sometimes used accusations of racism as an excuse. In the parent's opinion, the teachers were often simply trying to increase the level of motivation for academics and this increased pressure was misinterpreted and misrepresented as prejudice. No count of the number of references to racism in the transcripts was made, but after reading the transcripts a number of times, it is clear that there are a great many more unambiguous references to violence than there were clear references to instances of racism. This observation should not be interpreted to mean that there are no examples of school based racial incidents. There are all too many such examples directed toward each group of students. But it is also clear that students are not careful about this accusation and its incidence is greatly overstated.

The examples that students provided to support their contention were, at best and almost without exception, ambiguous in their racist content and almost certain intent. For example, a Black female told a story of a teacher who did not ask her for $200 for a field trip and then the student labeled the teacher a racist with no apparent sense of the complexity or seriousness of such an inference. A more probable interpretation and certainly a more generous one was that the teacher did not want to embarrass her, believing that the financial burden that such a request would impose upon a transfer student could not be met. It is also clear that the teacher should have found another way to approach the student to provide the opportunity to pay should the student's family be able to afford it, without the potential embarrassment if they could not. But labeling such an action on the part of the teacher as racist is not a very productive way to improve human interaction between teacher and student. More important, though, it is also an example of a student looking

for an explanation that is convenient and superficially external. Embracing victim status, has to be, in my opinion, a detriment to doing your best in school. Such an attribution to self lessens ones ability to focus on productive inner directed activities. By dismissing uncomfortable interactions due to reasons of skin tone, it deflects a person's reasoning away from actions that could be taken to eliminate the unwanted interaction in the future. In other words it is not an effective adaptation to discomfort.

Another example of a strongly felt accusation of racism was the student who reported that she was told that she looked like Whoopie Goldberg. It is very likely that the teacher did, in fact, think that the student looked like the movie actress who is admired by many Americans. If one is committed to being a victim and to an external locus of control (i.e., the victim of outside forces), it is possible to construct a scenario in which such a comment can be interpreted as a racist comment. But it is much more likely that what the teacher meant was exactly what she said -- the student looked to her like Whoopie Goldberg. It is extremely unlikely, that the teacher actually thinks that all blacks look like Whoopie Goldberg. Perhaps it would be helpful to contrast this teacher's characterization by thinking of a different statement of physical similarity. Suppose a teacher said that a student looked like Willie Horton. Comparing the looks of the student in a way that implies less desirable characteristics is quite different from comparing a student to someone who is widely respected. During adolescence, it seems that many students (Black or White) are sensitive to any comparison to another person. Somehow the schools (and society) need to begin to educate black and white students and teachers about racism in a way that helps all of us become less angry, less defensive, less sensitive, and less likely to choose to interpret incidents in a way that is not only hurtful but counter-productive. The "PLM" syndrome needs to be actively discouraged.

It is my conjecture that, just as illusions about what is responsible for academic success can be detrimental, so can the belief that all uncomfortable interactions must be due to racism. This is similar to the notion of "folk theories" to which Ogbu (1988) refers. These belief systems that guide a student's activities are quite important. Unfortunately, in the 1991-1993 longitudinal attitude survey data, only at the 4th to 6th grade transition do all groups show a movement toward more internal sense of responsibility for ones own success. Ogbu (1988) talks about the non-immigrant minorities and their differences in orientations and work ethic, including the "low-effort syndrome." The critical factor in what is being suggested here, is the focus on the adoption of belief systems that are not adaptive as far as academic achievement is concerned. Such a belief system might have been adaptive for African-Americans who lived in a much more hostile or institutionalized racist environment that was present only 30 or so years ago. Ogbu (1981) also discusses various non-adaptive strategies that have been adopted by African-Americans. Further evidence of the power of this cultural effect is summarized by Brody (1992) in the research on cross-racial adoption. In these studies, Brody reports that evidence for IQ differences was markedly diminished or eliminated for those African-American children adopted by White families.

In other words, this paper is arguing that the belief system that a student develops is related to how successful he or she is academically. Feelings of victimization and anger are not likely to be positively motivating, empowering or enabling attitudes. The examples that were cited by high school students in the focus groups were very different from what might have been stated or commonly observed in America prior to approximately 1965. For example, students did not report being given grades lower than they deserved only because of their color. They also did not report being unable to sign up for a class because such a class was limited by institutional policy to white students. In contrast, these students' readiness to engage in violence and their increased vigilance due to fear of attack is likely to have an inhibiting effect on successful academic achievement.

In the absence of being able to choose your own parents, we are all stuck with hard work (or what is called "time on task" when it occurs in the schools) as the way to be more successful.

The meta-analysis by Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994) indicates that, just as we found with our evaluation study, empirical evidence supports the belief that a cognitive measure is the best predictor of school learning. In their study, it was interesting to note that expert judgment rated the contribution of cognitive ability to academic achievement as lower than 5 other factors. In contrast, the empirical studies show that it has the highest relationship to school learning. Their empirical evidence also suggests that home environment and parental support are quite important. Further, it should be noted that their study does provide evidence for the importance of classroom management as a school factor. They cite the article by Doyle (1986) indicating that instructional techniques and teacher behaviors can influence school learning. The transfer program, in contrast, is not a school or curriculum program but is an effort to provide a large number of students a school choice.

Regardless of ability, students need to learn to behave consistent with taking a very strong position that disagrees with the item "Getting good grades is a matter of luck, not hard work." and we, as educators, need to make it clear that hard work is the only real answer. Years of research on achievement (motivation) starting with McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (1953) and now attribution theory are important sources for educators.

It is also important to understand and accept that unlike dealing with a person who has an eating problem, there is no forced tube feeding option. Ultimately, it is the student who has to learn, just as the horse has to decide to drink. No one actually ever "learns" anyone else anything. If the student is unable or unwilling to learn he or she will not learn. We have the responsibility to provide an environment in which it is safe to work hard and in which teachers value hard work and reward academic achievement. Providing such a school climate could be accomplished if the political environment will let us. The challenge is trying to impact on the home situation or the neighborhood environment in which the children spend the majority of their time. We often have to struggle just to be allowed to effectively discipline students who are openly violent in the schools.

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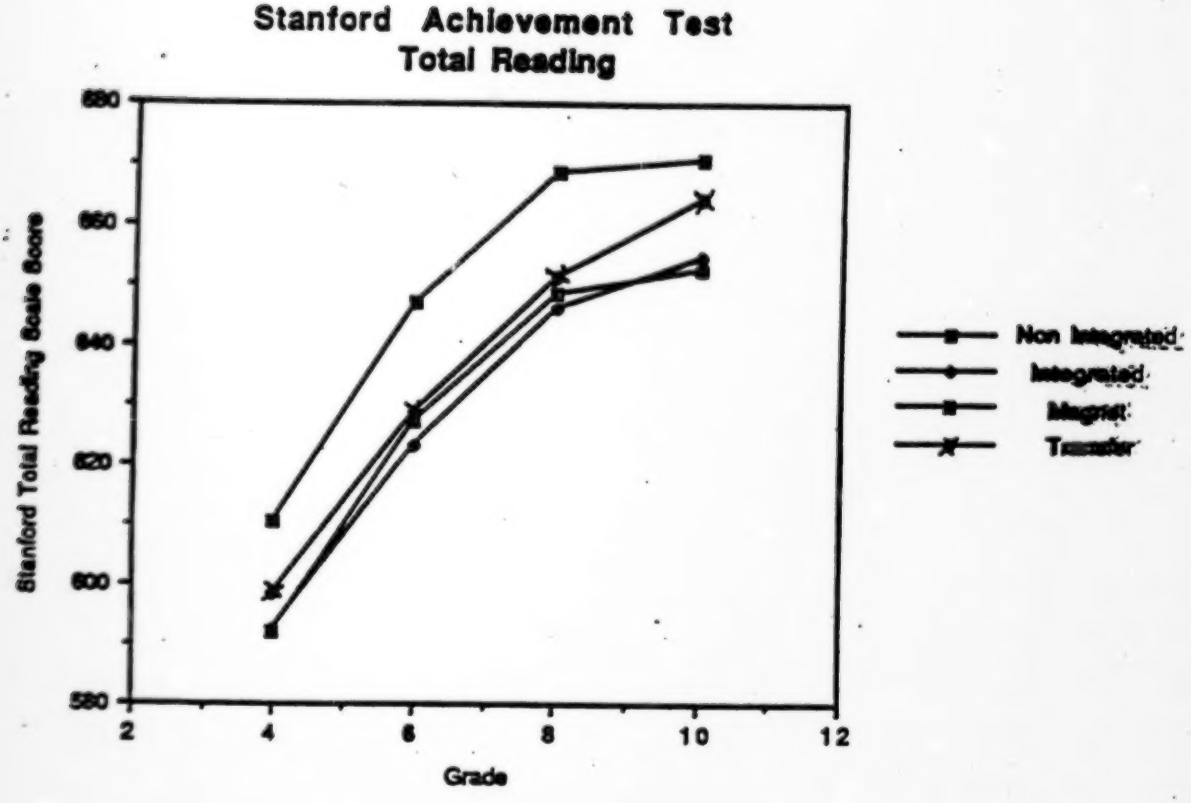
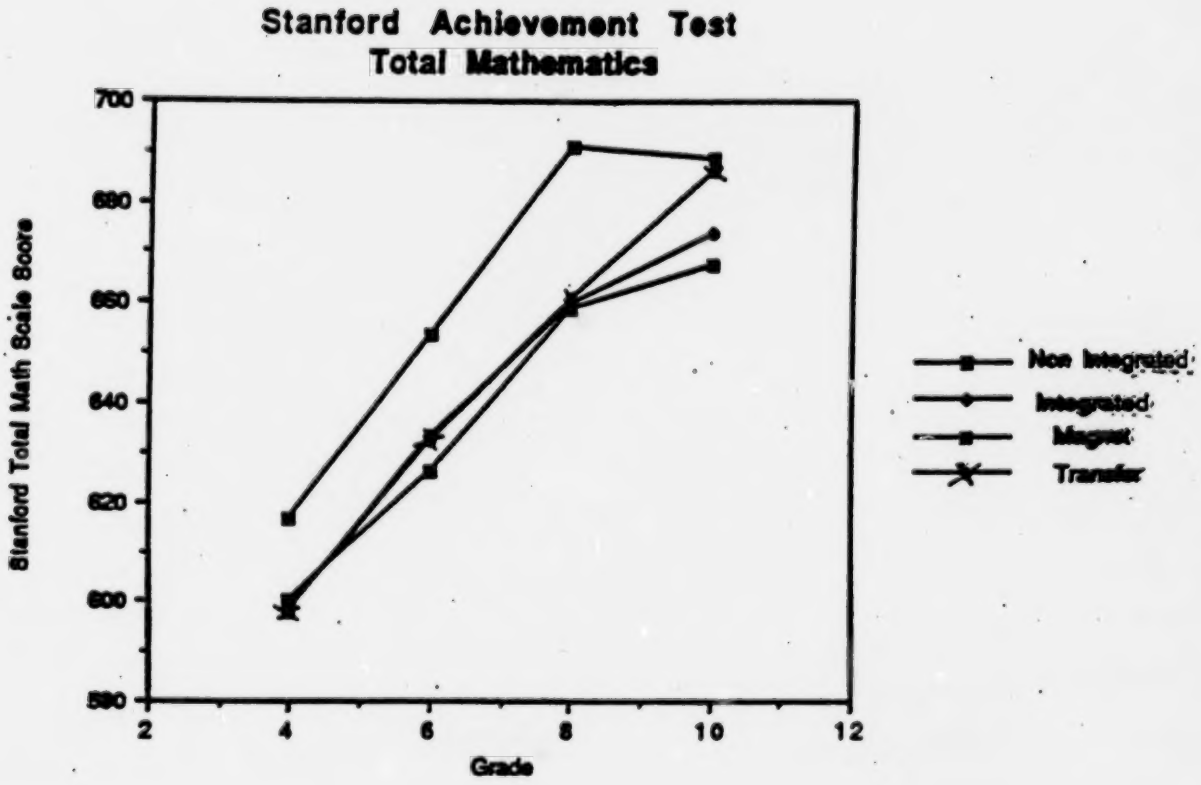
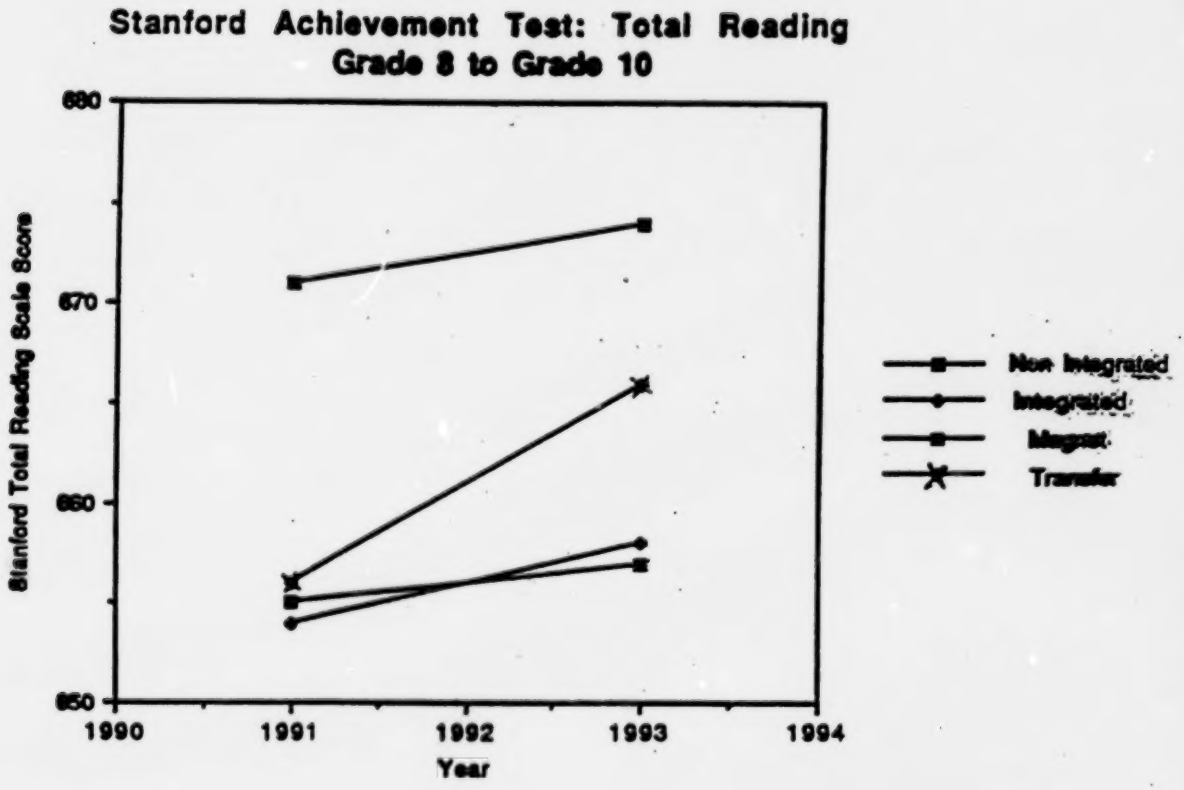


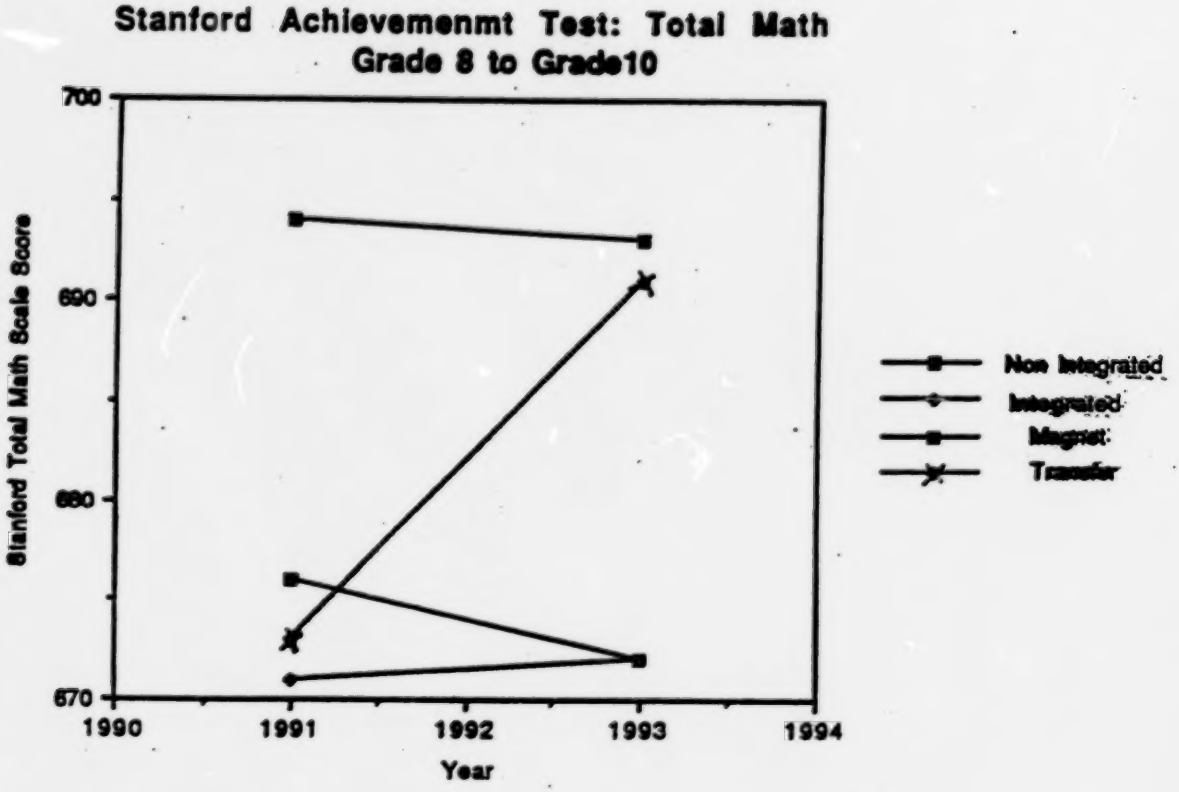
Stanford Achievement Test: Total Reading –
The Magnet students continue to show the highest level of performance, although the Transfer students are the only group to show substantive increased achievement in 10th grade.



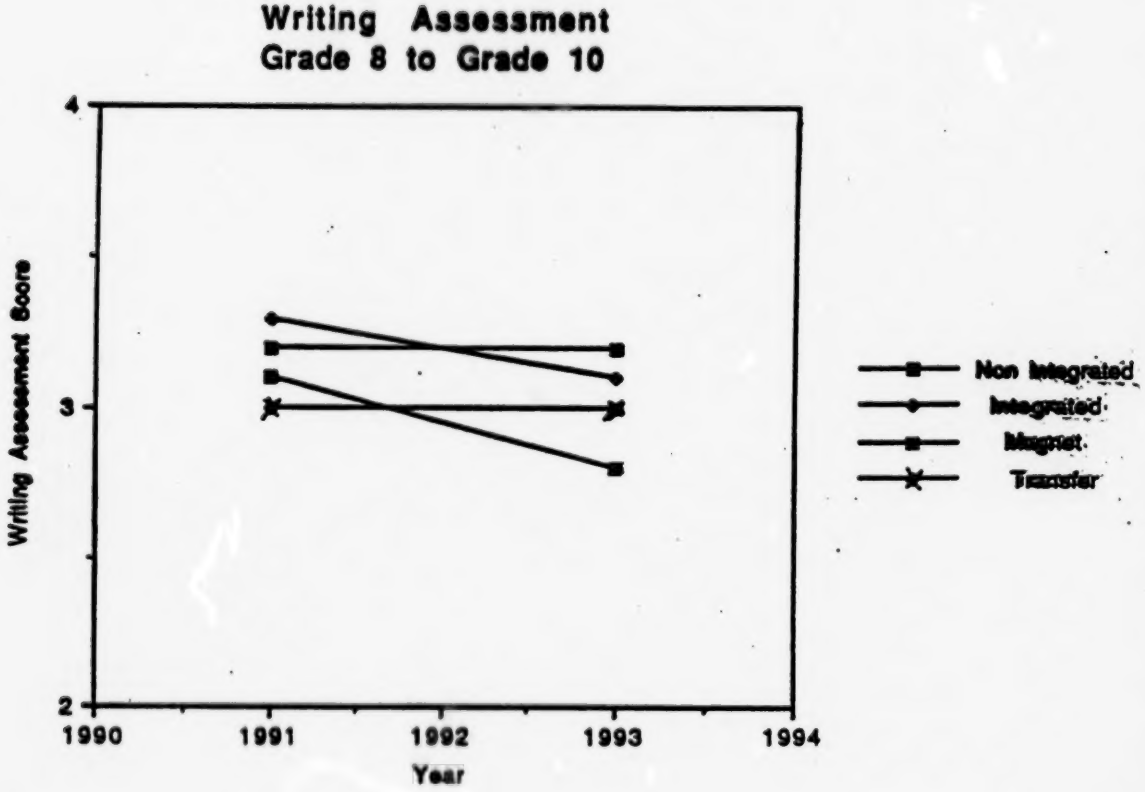
Stanford Achievement Test: Total Mathematics –
This result is similar to that found in 1991 and 1992. The Magnet students are the highest performing group of students, although the Transfer students show a stronger continued increase in performance level from 8 to 10th grade.



Stanford Achievement Test: Total Reading, Grade 8 to 10 –
The Magnet students have much higher performance levels than do the other three groups, although the Transfer students show a significantly greater rate of progress than do the Magnet or Non Integrated students.



Stanford Achievement Test: Total Math, Grade 8 to 10 –
The Magnet students remain above the other three groups in absolute performance level, but the Transfer students show a statistically and meaningfully greater rate of progress from 1991 to 1993 than any of the other three groups.



Writing Assessment, Grade 8 to 10 –
None of the groups show an improvement in writing performance from 1991 to 1993, although the Transfer students are statistically significantly different from the Non Integrated students.